

VZCZCXRO2547
PP RUEHROV
DE RUEHJM #2416 3251441
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 211441Z NOV 07
FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9748
INFO RUEHKK/ARAB ISRAELI COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L JERUSALEM 002416

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA FOR FRONT OFFICE. NSC FOR ABRAMS/SINGH/WATERS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/21/2017
TAGS: [KWBG](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [PHUM](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: MINISTER OF PRISONERS' AFFAIRS: PRIORITIZING
PRISONERS FOR RELEASE

REF: A. JERUSALEM 02205

[1](#)B. JERUSALEM 02156

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles, per reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Following PM Olmert's November 19 announcement that the GOI had approved the release of 441 Palestinian prisoners, PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs (MoPA) Ashraf al-Ajrami told the press that the release was based on GOI criteria without consultation with the PA. According to Al-Ajrami, pre-Oslo prisoners, prisoners with critical medical conditions, minors, and women are the PA's priority for release. Only the release of several thousand prisoners, including well-known political leaders and those in administrative detentions, will demonstrate GOI seriousness to the Palestinian public, according to Al-Ajrami. End Summary.

Criteria for Prisoners' Release

[1](#)2. (C) After PM Olmert announced on November 19 the release of 441 Palestinian prisoners, PA Minister of Prisoners' Affairs (MoPA) Ashraf al-Ajrami criticized the GOI for releasing prisoners based on its own criteria and without consulting the PA. He said that the list of 441 includes those sentenced for 12 years or more and does not demonstrate seriousness by the GOI. Al-Ajrami said in a November 14 meeting with PolChief that releasing several thousand prisoners -- not several hundred -- is necessary to signal GOI seriousness to the Palestinian public. He said recent, unilateral prisoners' releases do not demonstrate GOI seriousness. Al-Ajrami said the PA's priority order for releasing prisoners is first, the 350 pre-Oslo prisoners; second, the 50 with critical medical conditions; third, minors serving long sentences; and fourth, the 90 women. Releasing prisoners based on these criteria and in this order, said al-Ajrami, would increase popular support for PA President Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen) and the negotiations. Al-Ajrami added that releasing key political leaders who support the PA, including Fatah leader Marwan Barghouti, and the approximately 8,000 Palestinian prisoners in administrative detention would also bolster Abu Mazen's support.

GOI Restrictions on Prisoners: Transfer of Money

[1](#)3. (C) Al-Ajrami said his dialogue with the Israeli Prison Service (IPS) does not address the release of prisoners, only prison conditions, and in recent months, IPS rules have become stricter, including on the transfer of money to Palestinian criminal and security prisoners. Al-Ajrami said

that the Israeli anti-terrorism finance law governs money transfers to prisons, but stressed, "we don't understand how we violate this law by permitting prisoners to buy food from IPS-owned canteens in IPS prisons." According to al-Ajrami, the IPS suggested the MoPA transfer money to families of Palestinian prisoners in the West Bank and families bring the cash to prisoners during visits. Al-Ajrami said most families cannot obtain permits to visit Israeli prisons. Previously, the MoPA transferred money only to security prisoners (not criminals) and could send unlimited sums of money through the Israeli post to faction leaders who distributed funds. Al-Ajrami proposed that such money transfers continue or that the MoPA pay IPS canteen suppliers directly. Al-Ajrami added that tension is mounting among prisoners as a result of new restrictions. The IPS met Ketziot prisoners' minor demands after the October 22 incident, he said, but the core problems, like inadequate food supplies and a lack of medical treatment, remain the same.

WALLES